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ABSTRACT

Facial attractiveness has been the focus of considerable research in social psychology. Nonverbal behaviors emitted by the face may affect the perceived attractiveness of males and females differently. Visual behavior has particularly important functions in regulating social interaction and in establishing and conveying social power. Power and attractiveness may conflict, especially in American culture where men are attributed with more social, political, and economic power than women. To investigate the relationship between emitted power and attractiveness, this study used videotapes of men and women engaged in discussion with one another who displayed different levels of visual dominance behavior. Male (N=106) and female (N=109) college students viewed one of 18 prerecorded videotapes of males and females engaged in conversation. The tapes varied in naturally occurring expressed power (visual dominance behavior). Subjects rated one of the interactants for power and for attraction. Unlike previous research, subjects of both sexes rated stimulus males and females as more attractive when they emitted higher levels of visual dominance ($p < .001$). There were no significant sex differences in the findings. These results question the degree to which displays of power are interpreted consistently both by and for women and men. (Author/NB)

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Facial attractiveness has been the focus of considerable research in social psychology and its impact on judgements of people is far reaching. Cunningham (1986) investigated facial components which form the complete face and found that subjects viewed adult females as more attractive when they possessed the following features: large eyes, small noses and chins, prominent cheekbones, narrow cheeks, raised eyebrows, and enlarged pupils. More recently, Ellyson, Dovidio, Manning, Keating, and Brown (1990) found that maturity or immaturity interacted with target sex. They reported that immature facial features such as large eyes, small noses, and full lips were rated as more attractive for female faces whereas mature facial features such as thin lips, smaller eyes, and longer noses were rated as more attractive for male faces. DeBlasio and Ellyson (1990) found that even young children kindergarten age created attractive faces using this same criteria.

Interactions between women and men which lead to rated attractiveness do not normally occur in a vacuum. Facial features are not only the most relied upon cue in

attributions of attraction (Harper, Wiens, & Matatazzo, 1978), they also comprise the most monitored of nonverbal behaviors (Exline, 1972). These nonverbal behaviors emitted by the face may increase or decrease (or have no effect on) the perceived attractiveness of a different sex. The face, and more specifically the eyes, are the focus of the high levels of interactant attention.

With regards to power, visual behavior has particularly important functions in regulating social interaction and in establishing and conveying social power (Kleinke, 1986). Exline, Ellyson, and Long (1975), distinguishing between the theoretically different visual modes of looking while listening and looking while speaking, defined the ratio of proportion of time looking while speaking to the proportion of time looking while listening to another person as the *visual dominance ratio*. People who look more while speaking but look less while listening are displaying a higher ratio of visual dominance. A review of the empirical evidence on this topic (Ellyson, Dovido, & Brown, 1991) supports the validity of this nonverbal behavior in a wide variety of circumstances and with a broad range of subjects.

Power and attractiveness may conflict, particularly

in a culture such as ours where men are attributed with more social, political, and economic power than women (Basow, 1986). Sadalla, Kenrick, and Vershure (1987) found that dominant or powerful men were rated as more sexually attractive, but dominant or powerful women were not rated as being also sexually attractive.

To investigate the relationship between emitted power and attractiveness, we utilized videotapes (from a previous study [Ellyson et al., 1991]) of men and women engaged in discussion with one another who displayed different levels of visual dominance behavior. Uninvolved viewers, both female and male watched these videotapes. Based on Sadalla, Kenrick, and Vershure (1987), we might predict that men would not rate more powerful women as attractive, while females would rate more powerful men as attractive. We, however, hypothesized that power is attractive and being attractive is powerful -- regardless of gender.

Subjects. Two hundred fifteen undergraduates (106 males, 109 females) participated voluntarily in this study in exchange for extra credit in their introductory psychology class.

Procedure. Subjects arrived at the experimental room and were told that they were participating in a study of

first impressions. Subjects watched one of 18 prerecorded three minute silent color videotape of one female and one male engaged in discussion. Production of the tapes allowed full facial angle for both. Each subject was instructed to focus on only one of the two people. Sex of rater and sex of target were counterbalanced.

The videotapes displayed people emitting different levels of visual dominance behavior, which is the ratio of look/speak to look/listen. The ratio of visual dominance of the female and male stimuli were not statistically different (p=.92). After viewing the videotape, subjects completed a 32 item questionnaire with a 7 point scale designed to gauge their impressions of the target person. The questionnaire contained 9 items loading on "power" relating to factors such as leadership, dominance, influence, etc., 6 items loading on "attractiveness" relating to factors such as beauty, warmth, appeal, etc., and 17 non-scored filler items. After completing the questionnaires, subjects were debriefed and released.

Results. The data obtained supported the hypothesis. Videotaped females and males who displayed higher ratios of look/speak to look/listen (visual dominance behavior)

were rated as having greater social power (r [215] = .72, $p < .001$), a finding consistent with previous research (Dovidio & Ellyson, 1985), and were rated as being more attractive. In other words, subjects' ratings of power were also significantly and positively correlated with perceived attractiveness, and this was the case for all correlations (see Table 1). Additionally, assignment and analysis of power and attractiveness by median split revealed a significance relationship between displayed power and perceived attractiveness both for women (χ^2 = 8.49, $p < .004$) and for men (χ^2 = 9.55, $p < .002$).

Conclusions. The finding that both women and men rated the same and different sex other as more attractive when displaying power-linked behavior raises interesting questions. The Sadalla, Kenrick and Vershure (1987) finding was only partially replicated. One obvious reason for this disparity is that Sadalla et al. used photographs of same sex individuals in one of their four reported studies (the other three studies included written descriptions) while our tapes were of different sex subject pairs engaged in naturally occurring conversation. Because of our use of videotapes over photographs, subjects were able to observe a range of nonverbal behaviors. Additionally, Sadalla et al.

defined power displays from Mehrabian's (1969) conjectures about body-lean, gesturing, and head nods. These behaviors are only loosely connected to dominance (Carli, 1989) when compared to more potent factors such as visual behavior (Ridgeway, 1990).

When rating nonverbal behavior, researchers have used similar criteria for both females and males, concluding that nonverbal displays of power are more apparent in men. But when females and males disregard gender-linked stereotypes, their nonverbal actions are not typically displayed (Willson & Lloyd, 1990). Research of mixed-sex groups indicate that women adapt to their situation by assimilating traits of men --raising their voices, interrupting more often, and generally becoming more assertive (Carli, 1989; Hall & Braunwald, 1981). Once again, our videotapes were silent. Besides displaying a visual dominance behavior, what other nonverbal behaviors were the women emitting to receive a power rating? Perhaps the correlation found between attraction and power in this study, can be a step in furthering research that will explain why women display nonverbal power differently than men.

Table 1: Correlations between power ratings and attractiveness ratings.

subjects / targets	N	r	p
males rate males	(53)	.273	<.05
males rate females	(52)	.441	<.01
females rate males	(57)	.334	<.02
females rate females	(53)	.570	<.01
males rate overall	(105)	.390	<.01
females rate overall	(110)	.475	<.01
both rate males	(110)	.332	<.01
both rate females	(105)	.511	<.01
both rate overall	(215)	.437	<.01

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